

DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91125

FATHERS, DAUGHTERS, AND MOURNING IN MIDDLE COMEDIES

David Sundelson



HUMANITIES WORKING PAPER 56

January 1981

Abstract

This essay, part of a book about Shakespeare's treatment of fathers and father figures, discusses the middle comedies, concentrating on The Merchant of Venice. I argue that mourning for a lost father is the common psychological background of these plays, in which the characteristic fate of fathers has three stages: strength, collapse, and partial recovery. In Twelfth Night, unfinished mourning is a central feature of the plot but is transferred from fathers to brothers; in As You Like It and Much Ado About Nothing, the process has been completed; in The Merchant, the work of mourning dominates the action. Portia lives in the shadow of a dead father and demonstrates the "decomposition of ambivalence" which, according to psychoanalytic theory, is caused by such a loss: she revives a good father, Antonio, and destroys an evil one, Shylock. An additional part of her response is identification; like other heroines in the comedies, Portia embodies her lost father's essential qualities. These strategies do not completely resolve the play's conflicts about attachment, but they anticipate the greater tranquility of the romances.

Fathers, Daughters, and Mourning in Shakespeare's Middle Comedies

As if in a kindred dream, Orlando's adventures in the first two acts of As You Like It recapitulate the fraternal and Oedipal conflicts which dominate the major history plays. Once again, the two conflicts are closely connected: Orlando's "tyrant brother" (I.ii.278)¹ Oliver is also a tyrant father, since he rules their house in place of the dead Sir Rowland. Orlando seems ready enough to resist the double tyranny--he throttles Oliver and goes on to disable his brother's agent, Charles the Wrestler--but now the dream is less disturbing. Men are saved from acting out their own murderous impulses: Oliver's plan to burn his brother to death is mentioned and then forgotten, and unlike Bolingbroke's or Hal's, Orlando's easy victories spill no blood. In fact, he defeats Oliver but continues to defer to him: "I rather will subject me to the malice / Of a diverted blood and bloody brother" (II.iii.36-7).

The victors of Shrewsbury and Agincourt make no compromises, but in the Forest of Arden, self-assertion and submission coexist. Orlando interrupts Duke Senior's banquet to demand food at the point of his sword, but his "countenance of / Stern commandment" (II.vii.107-8) soon gives way to apology, thanks, and a whispered identification of himself as "good Sir Rowland's son" (II.vii.190). There is no need for Orlando to move beyond this filial posture, for Shakespeare places him within a sentimental framework of fathers who nourish and reassure

without oppressing: old Adam, who gives Orlando his savings and loyalty and places them both in the hands of a truly superior provider--"He that doth the ravens feed, / Yea, providently caters for the sparrow" (II.iii.43-4)--Duke Senior, who welcomes them to his sylvan banquet, even the "old religious man" (V.iv.159), a pater ex machina whose conversation makes an instant convert of the previously blood-thirsty Duke Frederick. Sir Rowland may be dead but his benevolence lives; the compromise lets Orlando become a man while remaining a son.

Orlando's struggles with other men dominate the first part of As You Like It and then recede into the background, and the middle comedies as a group present the same shift of attention. Conflicts between men in these plays are generally less pressing and less dangerous than in the Henry sequence, resolved by compromise more often than by violence, and no longer the central focus of Shakespeare's imagination. If history for him is almost exclusively a male affair, in the comedies he turns his attention to women, to an exploration of their nature, to their search for selfhood and attachment. Much Ado About Nothing, with its equal regard for Beatrice and Benedick, is something of an exception; the men in As You Like it, Twelfth Night, and The Merchant of Venice, whatever their superficial appeal, have little to match the sheer complexity of the heroines, not to mention their wit, enterprise, and depth of passion. "I am all the daughters of my father's house, / And all the brothers too" (II.iv.120-1), says Viola, and her remark

points to the importance of women in this group of plays.

Viola's words also suggest that Shakespeare submerges his interest in father-son conflicts in a revived concern with fathers and daughters, a concern which grows more and more central as he moves from the middle comedies through King Lear to the late romances.² The Merchant of Venice, a work in any case far more troubling than the other comedies, has a special place in this development, for it gives unusual prominence to the tension between fathers and daughters which marks the later plays. The father's will to which Portia submits sets the plot in motion, and Shylock's rage at the society that steals his daughter continues to drive it. Daughters are not the only difficult children, however, although they are the most important. Old Gobbo and the son he is too blind to recognize anticipate the much graver music of Gloucester and Edgar,³ and Shakespeare also hints at paternal and filial aspects of the uneasy bond between Antonio and Bassanio. In Ser Giovanni's Il Pecorone, one of the sources for the play, the father of the Bassanio figure has died, and the wealthy merchant who obtains money for him is his godfather. Shakespeare chooses to make the relationship less explicit but psychologically richer, an added opportunity for exploring the ambiguous nature of fatherly behavior.

Apparently benign paternal gestures often have a darker potential in The Merchant; in Shakespeare's mind the christening father is easily transformed into a hanging juryman. "In christ'ning shalt thou have two godfathers," says Gratiano; "Had I been judge,

thou shouldst have had ten more, / To bring thee to the gallows, not to the font" (IV.i.396-8). Many have found in The Merchant what C. L. Barber calls "the antithetical sort of comic form,"⁴ a play whose poles are Venice and Belmont, Shylock and Antonio, Jewish justice and Christian mercy, but the antithesis collapses when the same vindictive paternal wishes animate the Venetian and the Jew he loathes. Recent critics have been more responsive to such ironies, alert to the play's subversion of the very divisions and distinctions it seems to establish.⁵ The prevailing confusion is particularly evident with respect to fathers. Jessica calls her house "hell" (II.iii.2), and we tend to believe her when we hear Shylock's "Fast bind, fast find-- / A proverb never stale in thrifty mind" (II.v.55-6), but the possessiveness that seems tyrannical in him is benevolent in Portia's father, at least according to Nerissa: "Your father was ever virtuous," she says when Portia complains about his elaborate and restrictive will, "and holy men at their death have good inspirations" (I.ii.27-8). Shakespeare is clearly of two minds about paternal wishes to control a daughter, and much of the play's distinctive richness arises from this central conflict.

Nerissa turns Portia's father into a spokesman of some other-worldly wisdom, but she fails to lessen the force of her mistress's puns: "so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father" (I.ii.23.5). Among the meanings of "will" here is "desire";⁶ an incestuous attachment stands in the way of Portia's marriage, even though her father is not physically present in the play. Shakespeare makes this more explicit when Portia responds to her suitor Morocco:

But if my father had not scanted me
 And hedg'd me by his wit, to yield myself
 His wife who wins me by the means I told you,
 Your self (renowned prince) then stood as fair
 As any comer I have looked on yet
 For my affection. (II.i.17-21)

The audience knows that Portia finds all her suitors equally unappetizing, but there is more here than her courteous duplicity. An actress need not pause after "wife" to make the point: the scarcely disguised purpose of her father's wit is to preserve indefinitely Portia's identity as his wife, just as Shylock, if he had his way, would imprison Jessica forever. Unlike the disobedient daughters in other plays, Hermia and Juliet, for example, or Beatrice, who advises her cousin Hero to "let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another cur'sy and say, 'Father, as it please me'" (II.i.51-2), Portia offers no resistance to a possessive father. The concluding imagery of her speech, which mocks the ardent Morocco's potency ("stood as fair / As any comer"), is psychologically appropriate: such potency, however attractive, is nothing when opposed to the incestuous bond.

When fathers both imprison and protect, they provoke the ambivalence which pervades the play. We hear it even in the opening description of Antonio's ships at sea:

your argosies with portly sail,
 Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
 Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,

Do overpeer the petty traffickers

That cur'sy to them, do them reverence,

As they fly by them with their woven wings. (I.i.9-14)

Salerio flatters the powerful merchant, but the speech also expresses a central yearning for benign and glorious patriarchy in which stately signiors receive due homage from the lesser creatures they "over-peer." Once complete, however, Salerio's vision spawns its own opposite:

But I should think of shallows and of flats,

And see my wealthy Andrew dock'd in sand

Vailing her high top lower than her ribs

To kiss her burial (I.i.26-9)

Paternal grandeur leads only to abasement and death.

Salerio expresses the conflicting wishes about fathers which correspond to their dual nature in the play, the longing to embrace a commanding father and at the same time to destroy him, as well as an associated fear: even a strong father may be exposed to the "dreadful touch / Of merchant marring rocks" (III.ii.270-1), may collapse in spite of apparent strength. This shift from lordliness to passivity appears elsewhere as well. The assertive but vulnerable "high top" of Antonio's ship links him with the play's most menacing and most vulnerable father, Shylock.

You may as well forbid the mountain pines

To wag their high tops, and to make no noise

When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven . . .

As seek to soften that--than which what's harder?--

His Jewish heart. (IV.i.75-80)

The pines at first seem majestic, even invincible, but the next line makes them passive, "fretten with the gusts"--a change which prefigures Antonio's own peril and that of his ships as well as Shylock's fate.

Each of the other three fathers in The Merchant has a comparably paradoxical nature and elicits similar, contradictory feelings, and ambivalence of the same kind figures in two of the other middle comedies, although somewhat less prominently. In Much Ado About Nothing, fathers at first seem vigorous enough to compete with younger men, but their air of command only conceals a pitiable helplessness. There is hidden frailty in both Don Pedro, who plays the part of a father in arranging Claudio's and Benedick's marriages, and in Hero's father Leonato. With great confidence, Pedro offers not only to approach Leonato on Claudio's behalf but to do the young man's wooing for him: "And take her hearing prisoner with the force / And strong encounter of my amorous tale" (I.i.312-13)--the idea of prison makes him sound a bit like Shylock. His tale proves amorous enough for both Claudio and Benedick to conclude that "The Prince woos for himself" (II.i.168), but his triumph is brief. Not only does Pedro faithfully hand Hero over to her young lover, but when he suddenly proposes to Beatrice, she rejects him, and their mutual regard softens but does not hide his defeat and disappointment. Indeed, one way of understanding the destructive plot of Pedro's brother Don John--in which Pedro collaborates energetically if blindly--is as a display of vindictive paternal jealousy which Shakespeare splits off from the apparently kind-hearted Prince.

Leonato's successive changes represent a more complete version of Shakespeare's characteristic treatment of fathers in the comedies. He is at first all hospitality and confidence; at his daughter's wedding he

begins by telling the Friar how to do his business and even--an echo of Pedro's wooing--presumes to answer the crucial question on the bridegroom's behalf: "I dare make his answer" (IV.i.17). From there, his collapse is swift and nearly total. He first joins in the hysterical denunciation of his daughter, adding his own distinctively self-pitying note, and then exposes his impotence to Pedro's and Claudio's ridicule by attempting to challenge them: "We had lik'd to have had our noses snapp'd off with two old men without teeth" (V.i.116-17). After this period of cruelty and weakness he is restored to a chastened version of his former authority when he sets the penance for the Prince and Claudio and presides at the final marriage scene. In spite of this partial recovery, the pervasive impression in Much Ado is of fatherly ineptness rescued by villainy's even greater ineptness and by the magical success of social collaboration as embodied in the Watch: "What your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light" (V.i.227-9). With the constable Dogberry as well as with Leonato, Shakespeare employs a doubling mechanism that seems to save some of their dignity by giving each an even older and more doddering partner--Leonato's brother Antonio and Dogberry's assistant Verges--but the device finally emphasizes the weakness of fathers by filling the stage with ludicrously feeble (if endearing) old men.

The same pattern of paternal strength, collapse, and (at times) recovery⁷ appears in As You Like It. The appealing Duke Senior is a natural leader in the forest but was not strong enough to resist the usurpation that sent him there. Oliver, for all his tyrannical posturing, is equally weak: Orlando must rescue him from the snake and lioness that menace him

as he lies asleep, open-mouthed and utterly vulnerable. The play's clearest example of the strong/weak father is Adam, named after the first father who suffered the first fall, the "good old man" (II.iii.56)--Pedro uses the same phrase repeatedly to describe Leonato in Much Ado--who accompanies Orlando into banishment. He saves Orlando from turning highwayman and claims to be vigorous in spite of his age--"Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty" (II.iii.47)--but in the forest the good old man becomes a "poor old man" (II.iii.63), Orlando's dependent child who nearly dies for lack of food, then recovers only to disappear from the play. Where is a father to rely on? Again and again in these plays, those who seem potent and even threatening require special protection and care.

The paradoxical nature of fathers is especially evident in The Merchant, where they tend to be both stronger and weaker than in the other comedies. Portia's, for example, is at once the chief director of her conduct and dead, both constantly present and utterly absent. This contradiction suggests a Shakespeare preoccupied by unfinished mourning, by a recognition that the father is dead which cannot conquer the impulse to cling to him. In Twelfth Night, this unfinished mourning is a central feature of the plot but is transferred from fathers to brothers. In Much Ado and As You Like It, the process has been finished, and its completion accounts in part for their generally sunny mood, their easy tolerance of fathers who are benignly present but not finally of much consequence, and their focus on youthful courtship and self-discovery. In The Merchant, with its collection of powerful but fragile fathers, the difficult work of mourning dominates the action.

The range of filial postures which such baffling fathers can evoke

appears as burlesque in Launcelot's meeting with Old Gobbo. When his father is absent, Launcelot is willing to denigrate him and almost to disavow their kinship: "'being an honest man's son,' or rather an honest woman's son, for indeed my father . . . had a kind of taste" (II.ii.14-17). As if conjured up by his son's disloyal meditation, the old man suddenly appears. Launcelot at once acknowledges the bond between them; fathers in The Merchant are not to be so casually dismissed.

Launcelot. [Aside] O heavens! this is my true-begotten father, who being more than sand-blind, high gravel-blind, knows me not, --I will try confusions with him.

Gobbo. Master young gentleman, I pray you which is the way to Master Jew's?

Launcelot. Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left; marry at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house. (II.ii.32-41)

Now it is the father who fails to acknowledge his son. Less ambiguously than Edgar's in King Lear, Launcelot's "confusions" turn hostility into a game which joins anger at his father's blindness to a certain anxiety about it.

One cause of the anger emerges in the exchange that follows: Old Gobbo insists that Launcelot is "No master sir, but a poor man's son" (II.ii.48). The issue is the same one at the heart of Portia's struggle with her father and Jessica's victory over hers: a child's separateness. By announcing his own death, Launcelot parodies the way both Portia and Jessica "die" to their fathers by marrying. He wants to "raise the waters"

(II.ii.46)--both to torment his father and elicit some sign of his love. The joke thus expresses both his wish for autonomy and his fear of it.

Gobbo. Marry, God forbid! the boy was the very staff
of my age, my very prop.

Launcelot. [Aside] Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-
post, a staff, or a prop? (II.ii.63-6)

Launcelot's resentment scarcely hides his obvious relief. Old Gobbo's confession of weakness and need, paradoxically, allows Launcelot to be a child forever: "I am Launcelot, your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be" (II.ii.81-2). Gobbo salutes his son with the same words to which Shylock gives a cutting edge, "thou art mine own flesh and blood" (II.ii.88), and Bassanio confirms the reunion of father and son when he meets them with the command, "One speak for both" (II.ii.133). Indeed, the two identities almost merge. We see another version of this fusion, sinister instead of comic, in Leonato's revealing outburst in Much Ado when his daughter is defamed.

But mine, and mine I lov'd, and mine I prais'd,
And mine that I was proud on, mine so much
That I myself was to myself not mine,
Valuing of her . . . (IV.i.135-8)

Here a father's sense of separate existence disappears in his identification with his child, and he feels annihilated by shame that is properly his daughter's, not his. A different sense of fusion, as I shall try to show, nourishing rather than destructive, strengthens Rosalind and helps end the conflict between Portia and her father, an alternative to the total separateness which she and Launcelot only half-heartedly pursue.

In addition to Portia's father, two other loving paternal jailers impede a comic resolution in The Merchant, and Portia defeats them both. One is Shylock, of course, who loses his daughter, his fortune, and his very being, insofar as that being depends on the Jewishness he is forced to abandon. In him paternity becomes nightmarish and demonic, and is utterly destroyed. Antonio is a different story. Like Duke Senior and Leonato, who preside over banquets, or their humbler prototype Corin, the "faithful feeder" (II.iv.95) of Celia and Rosalind, he is a rather maternal father, although he provides gold, not food. Unlike theirs, however, his nurturing is almost explicitly feminine and seductive: "My purse, my person, my extremest means / Lie all unlock'd to your occasions" (I.i.38-9). The offer seems to distinguish him from the "stony" (IV.i.4), "impenetrable" (III.iii.18) Shylock, all bolts and shutters, but Antonio's yielding passivity hides an even more formidable possessiveness. His apparent altruism lets him harp on Bassanio's debt: "'for the Jew's bond which he hath of me-- / Let it not enter in your mind of love'" (II.viii.41-2). Leslie Fiedler insists that the bond deceives the "gullible Antonio,"⁸ but the merchant's sophistication and hatred of Shylock make this very unlikely. It seems more plausible that he accepts the bond because it serves his purposes splendidly. The martyrdom for which he is "arm'd and well prepar'd" (IV.i.262) will at once punish "a tainted wether of the flock" (IV.i.114) for his forbidden wishes and gratify them by binding Bassanio forever.

Commend me to your honorable wife.

Tell her the process of Antonio's end,

Say how I lov'd you, speak me fair in death;

And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge

Whether Bassanio had not once a love.

Repent but you that you shall lose your friend

And he repents not that he pays your debt . . . (IV.i.271-7)

No wife, however wondrous, can hope to equal such a proof of love, and Antonio expects his death to place him where he could never hope to be in life: between Portia and Bassanio. Understandably, the exultation at his "release" comes from his friends, not from Antonio himself. Victory for the merchant is truly a defeat, for in releasing him Portia triumphs over not one possessive father but two.

Triumphs is perhaps too strong a word, for Portia's strategy is one of compromise. She destroys one father but revives another, whose blessing, although somewhat unwilling, catalyzes the play's final resolution. The "learned doctor's" request for Bassanio's ring seems to give Antonio a chance to salvage some kind of victory, even though the martyrdom he seeks has been averted. "Let his deservings and my love withal / Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment" (IV.i.448-50). This plea has the tact born of desperation: "and my love withal" sounds like an afterthought. Still, the real significance of the lines is hard to mistake: Antonio creates a contest between Bassanio's loyalty to him and to Portia. Her own prediction stresses the homosexual attachment whose strength Bassanio and Gratiano half-knowingly demonstrate: "We shall have old swearing / That they did give the rings away to men" (IV.ii.15-16).

Portia calls her rescue of the merchant a "delivering" (IV.i.414), and Jessica invokes a parallel in myth: "Medea gathered the enchanted herbs / That did renew old Aeson" (V.i.13-14). The old Aeson himself confirms these suggestions of rebirth: "Sweet lady, you have given me

life and living" (V.i.286). As the King of France, just as magically revived by Helena in All's Well, knows, and as The Merchant shows more than once, a child has obligations. Portia can bow to her husband's continuing attachment--"You should in all sense be much bound to him" (V.i.136)--because her defeat of Shylock releases the merchant from one bond but replaces it with another. "Antonio, gratify this gentleman," says the Duke, pointing to the learned doctor, "for in my mind you are much bound to him" (IV.i.404-5). The Duke is right, and not just about Antonio: The Merchant enacts the passage from psychological chains that are destructive and sterile to new ones, which bind virtually all the Venetians to Portia.

Just as her legal sorcery forces Shylock to become a good father in spite of himself by making over his property "Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter" (IV.i.388), Portia's trickery with the rings binds Antonio into her own marriage, after he admits that as "th' unhappy subject of these quarrels" (V.i.238) he has impeded it.

Antonio. I once did lend my body for his wealth,
Which, but for him that had your husband's ring
Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith advisedly.

Portia. Then you shall be his surety. Give him this
And bid him keep it better than the other.

Antonio. Here Lord Bassanio. Swear to keep this ring.
(V.i.249-56)

Both Portia's rescued child and a somewhat reluctant and befuddled Prospero, Antonio here enacts a revised version of his earlier role. With the "surety" of a father's blessing, Jill has Jack at last.

Portia's union with Bassanio has a double blessing, since she has transformed Antonio and also remained loyal to her father's will, but even so reassuring a context leaves major anxieties about courtship, whether successful or not, anxieties which help explain the significance of the play's most formidable father, Shylock. To begin with, each of Portia's suitors must accept in advance a penalty for failure of permanent celibacy. Those who accept this distinctive condition confront the ominous legend on the lead casket: "'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath'" (II.vii.9). No wonder that proud Aragon and bold Morocco retreat before a casket "which rather threaten'st than dost promise aught" (III.ii.105), as even Bassanio realizes; the threat is doubly clear since "give" implies the loss of what is hazarded. He who woos Portia and fails loses his manhood, and he who succeeds, the legend implies, will lose it too. Bassanio's soliloquy on the portrait he finds even tries to make such a prospect acceptable. He admires the

sever'd lips

Parted with sugar breath; so sweet a bar

Should sunder such sweet friends (III.ii.118-20).

Portia herself divides the sweet friends Antonio and Bassanio, but the imagery makes a compensating erotic promise. This seductiveness is posed against a castration fear strong enough to elicit "sever'd," "parted," and "sunder" in the space of three lines. To use a psychoanalytic term, the passage is richly overdetermined: it mediates between conflicting resentment (underscored perhaps by the hissing alliteration), fear, desire, and regret.

Bassanio's remarks about the gold and silver caskets express his am-

bivalence more elaborately.

Look on beauty,
 And you shall see 'tis purchas'd by the weight,
 Which therein works a miracle of nature,
 Making them lightest that wear most of it.
 So are those crisped snaky golden locks,
 Which make such wanton gambols with the wind
 Upon supposed fairness, often known
 To be the dowry of a second head,
 The skull that bred them in the sepulchre. (III.ii.88-96)

In the very act of winning his bride, Bassanio broods on the promiscuity of women and, what is more, imagines them as snaky-haired Medusas. Beneath their beauty he confronts a death's head, as if repeating in fantasy the adventure of Morocco, who found "A carrion Death, within whose empty eye / There is a written scroll" (II.vii.63-4). The empty eye haunts Bassanio too; the beauty of Portia's portrait makes him fear for the painter.

But her eyes--
 How could he see to do them? having made one,
 Methinks it should have power to steal both his
 And leave itself unfurnish'd (III.ii.123-6).

Blindness here is a displacement of castration, of being left "unfurnished," but the displacement, like transferring the whole matter to the painter, fails to dissipate the persistent anxiety. Bassanio has already noted the hidden inadequacy of those seeming heroes "Who inward search'd, have livers white as milk" (III.ii.86). When eligible men are so worthless, it is hardly surprising if "the dowry of a second head," with its ambiguous preposition,

suggests that the marriage portion may be destined for someone other than the new husband. Does the following line, "the skull that bred them in the sepulchre," tell us who this might be--a dead father, like Portia's? Whether fathers are involved or not, the line links sexuality and death, graves and breeding. Choosing a wife means choosing a casket,⁹ and Nerissa makes the same connection by citing an "ancient saying . . . / Hanging and wiving goes by destiny" (II.ix.82-3).

The "ancient saying" makes the play's anxieties about sex into a cultural truism and thus disarms questions about their source. The anxiety is indeed distinctively free-floating in The Merchant, not bound exclusively to Oedipal conflict or to even earlier, pre-Oedipal fears of women themselves,¹⁰ although both are certainly present. The fear of women animates Bassanio's description of his beloved's "snaky golden locks" and leads us to the uneasy joking about rings which dominates the final scene, but a middle term is missing which might clarify what I believe is a connection between the two episodes. This term can be found in what is perhaps the oddest passage in As You Like It, Oliver's dream-like description of his rescue by Orlando.

Under an old oak, whose boughs were moss'd with age
And high top bald with dry antiquity:
A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back. About his neck
A green and gilded snake had wreath'd itself,
Who with her head nimble in threats approach'd

The opening of his mouth; but suddenly,
 Seeing Orlando, it unlink'd itself,
 And with indented glides did slip away
 Into a bush, under which bush's shade
 A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,
 Lay couching, head on ground, with catlike watch
 When that the sleeping man should stir . . .
 This seen, Orlando did approach the man
 And found it was his brother . . .

. . . kindness, nobler ever than revenge,
 And nature, stronger than his just occasion,
 Made him give battle to the lioness,
 Who quickly fell before him; in which hurtling
 From miserable slumber I awak'd. (IV.iii.105-33)

The sudden shift from third person to first underlines the discovery of a true self: falling asleep as Orlando's tyrant brother and father, Oliver, like Antonio in The Merchant, is re-born as a grateful child. The rescuing Orlando replaces what seem to be parent figures of unequal strength and contrasting impulses. The "old oak," with its "high top" which recalls Antonio's ships, is like a watchful but fundamentally impotent father, like Adam, who becomes Orlando's dependent instead of his guardian. The menacing snake could be a male threat--Rosalind has just told Silvius, "I see love hath made thee a tame snake" (IV.iii.70-1)--or perhaps a sexless one, as the repeated "itself" suggests, but "her head" contradicts the neuter pronouns,

as if meaning were emerging in spite of a wish to conceal it. The snake is aiming for the sleeper's mouth, a gesture which transforms feeding into aggression and implicit feminization; Oliver seems about to be raped. Elsewhere in Shakespeare, snakes are associated with mothers: Caliban's mother Sycorax "Was grown into a hoop" (I.ii.259), and in All's Well the Countess tells Helena, "When I said, 'a mother,' / Methought you saw a serpent" (I.iii.133-4).¹¹ The hints of an aggressive, devouring mother in Oliver's tale are confirmed when the snake gives way to "the sucked and hungry lioness" (IV.iii.127) whose watchfulness is predatory, not protective.

The green and gilded snake wrapped possessively around Oliver's neck has already appeared in The Merchant as the troublesome wedding rings which return to disrupt the final scene's harmony after the men have given them away.

a paltry ring

That she did give me, whose posy was

For all the world like cutler's poetry

Upon a knife, "Love me, and leave me not." (V.i.147-50)

Portia has disarmed the murderous Shylock and created a benign father to replace him, but castration fears surface once again in Gratiano's description; Shakespeare strains here for an atmosphere of release without attaining it. Women themselves--specifically, the vagina¹²--remind him of cutlers and knives--compare the derisive use of "cut" in Twelfth Night, as in "call me cut" (II.iii.187)--and even the

sentimental inscription begins to sound ominous. As Bassanio did with the painter, Gratiano tries to deflect these threats onto a scapegoat: the nonexistent "clerk" Nerissa says will be her lover. "Would he were gelt that had it for my part" (V.i.144), Gratiano says of the ring, combining in one phrase fear for his own "part" and an attempt to relieve it. Bassanio, who knows that such aggression is unwise in Belmont, offers instead a fantasy of propitiation: "Why, I were best to cut my left hand off / And swear I lost the ring defending it" (V.i.177-8).

Such extreme measures will not be necessary, but this strategy stresses the profound uneasiness still inspired by sexual union, as does the play's concluding speech, where caution seems stronger than eagerness.

--the first inter'gatory

That my Nerissa shall be sworn on is,
Whether till the next night she had rather stay
Or go to bed now, being two hours to day.
But were the day come, I should wish it dark
Till I were couching with doctor's clerk.
Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing

So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring. (V.i.300-7)

The surprising question put to Nerissa (which she never gets to answer) only renews the delaying tactics which also lie beneath Portia's request that Bassanio "tarry, pause a day or two" (III.ii.1) before he confronts the caskets. Bassanio will not wait, but Shakespeare

divides the new husband and wife as soon as they exchange their vows, as he does in Othello. Even as the curtain falls on what should be four happy lovers, one of them proposes (in jest, to be sure) to postpone their consummation once again.

"Love me, and leave me not": Portia resolves one conflict about attachment but another one remains. Fathers dominated the play's old order, and Portia embodies some of their authority, but her own command seems primarily maternal. Antonio's ships have all "miscarried" (II.viii.29)--the word recurs in the final scene--and he can no longer supply Bassanio's needs. But Portia's nurture is unlimited and available to all: "Fair ladies," says Lorenzo, "you drop manna in the way of starved people" (V.1.294-5). Even so good a mother, it seems, calls up the threatening snake and associated fears of annihilating fusion, of engulfment in a whirlpool. The metaphor is Shakespeare's. The play's new chain of gift and debt makes a prophecy, surprisingly, of Launcelot's uneasy joke: "Thus when I shun Scylla, your father, I fall into Charybdis, your mother" (III.v.14-15).

The woman imagined as a monster, whether Charybdis or some other, occasionally breaks through the celebration of femininity in the comedies. Even the gentle Viola calls herself "poor monster" (II.ii.34), and her confrontation with Sir Andrew makes Toby think of "cockatrices" that "kill one another by the look" (III.iv.197-8)--mythical serpents with a family resemblance to the snake which menaces Oliver and to Portia's snaky-haired portrait. Most of the time, of

course, Shakespeare keeps us (and himself) from connecting Portia with anything monstrous--except as its antagonist--by giving us Shylock, who is Scylla and Charybdis rolled into one. The general hatred of the Jew makes psychological sense against the play's background of pervasive but vague anxiety about sex. He is the monster Venice needs, the source of every threat; he gives the menace a local habitation and a name. Freud wrote that "the castration complex is the deepest unconscious root of antisemitism,"¹³ and Fiedler links the knife-wielding Jew with "Father Abram" (I.iii.157) and the sacrifice of Isaac;¹⁴ Shylock suggests all this and more.

Shylock's most obvious and specific threat is his hunger for the pound of flesh, but a special command of language, more than anything else, is what makes his menace so general. Sigurd Burckhardt writes that "the toughness of Shylock's argument is embodied in the toughness of his lines, his passion in their speed and directness; this is a man who speaks,"¹⁵ and the Jew's potent and dominating voice has special value in a play which equates sexual failure and muteness. "But if you fail," Portia reminds Aragon, "without more speech my lord / You must be gone from hence immediately" (II.ix.7-8). Both Aragon and Morocco speak at length before they choose; failure reduces them to curt farewells. Gratiano makes the connection more explicit; "'tis my love that speaks," (I.i.87), he claims, and even insists that prolixity and potency are inseparable: "silence is only commendable / In a neat's tongue dried" (I.i.111-12). Gratiano defends his own

garrulousness rather too vehemently, however; in the courtroom, his copious flow of words has no power over Shylock, who exults in the exposure of an enemy's impotence.

Gratiano.

Can no prayers pierce thee?

Shylock. No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

(IV.i.126-7)

"Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?" (V.i.127) asks Don Pedro in Much Ado. The failure of his wit makes Gratiano vulnerable to another version of what menaces his friend Bassanio: "Repair thy wit, good youth," says Shylock, "or it will fall / To cureless ruin" (IV.i.141-2). The Jew's taunts are nearly as cutting as his knife.

The courtroom proof of wit's vulnerability dramatizes threats buried in the preceding chatter of Launcelot and Lorenzo. Launcelot's eagerness to "exhibit [his] tongue" (II.iii.10) draws a good-natured rebuke: "How every fool can play upon the word! I think the best grace of wit will shortly run into silence" (III.v.41-3). "Play upon the word" suggests the potency of wit turned upon itself in a masturbatory way, and when Launcelot persists, Lorenzo exclaims, "wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant?" (III.v.53-4). Shakespeare here compresses into a single line the movement from exhibition to exposure which humiliates Gratiano in the courtroom. Launcelot's foolish puns make Lorenzo call him a "wit-snapper" (III.v.47), and Gratiano finds a more sinister kind of wit-snapper in Shylock, who warns him, in effect, that the reason not to show his wit is to keep from losing it. The word "wealth," in addition, links

this danger to Antonio's; in signing the bond, the merchant who has already "lost one shaft" (I.i.140) for Bassanio exposes his whole wealth to cureless ruin as Launcelot and Gratiano expose their wits. Exhibit and exposure, sexual adventure and the threat of castration, thus comprise the motif which links wealth and wit, merchant, servant, and suitors, and unites them all as Shylock's potential victims.

Shylock combines aspects of the snake and lioness from As You Like It with a human face and paternal robes. He will not nourish others; his servant Launcelot, he complains, is a "huge feeder" (II.v.47). Instead, like the snake, he replaces feeding with aggression, indeed, as Fiedler suggests, with cannibalism. "'I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him,' he declares of Antonio . . . and the metaphor is reinforced a few lines later when he remarks, even more inadvertently it would seem to Antonio, who has just entered, 'Your Worship was the last man in our mouths.'"¹⁶ These signs make Shylock a composite figure: not only castrating father but wicked mother as well, a mother who devours children instead of feeding them and for that reason refuses to share ordinary meals. "I will not eat with you" (I.iii.34-5), he tells Antonio, and his conspicuous and insistent strangeness distracts Venetians like Gratiano from the more mysterious and perhaps more frightening strangeness of women. Whatever else it is, antisemitism in The Merchant is also a crucial displacement of misogyny, misogyny based on fear.

Shylock not only absorbs hostility which otherwise might be directed at women, he also expresses some of that hostility himself.

Jessica's purchase of a monkey with the ring given Shylock by his wife is a betrayal of the marriage bond; not surprisingly, her father's anger anticipates the sound of Othello's. "I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear: would she were hears'd at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin" (III.i.83-5). This cry for revenge draws some of its intensity from disguised sexual wishes ("jewels in her ear"). The conjunction of erotic feeling and coffins looks ahead to Bassanio's experience with the caskets, his fantasy of "the skull that bred them in the sepulchre," but what is merely an anxious, implicitly hostile undercurrent in Bassanio's triumph is magnified and released in Shylock's rage.

Portia's victory over Shylock complements psychologically her victory over Antonio. Like Hamlet, she lives in the shadow of a dead father, and their responses to the loss have a common element: the radical splitting of ambivalence which such a loss often generates, with fear, rage, and contempt going in one direction, admiration, trust, and love in another.¹⁷ Hamlet tries to preserve an untainted memory of his father by aiming all his anger and scorn at his uncle; he idealizes one father and debases the other. Portia attempts a similar feat. Her mourning has two parts, and each asserts her mastery over death in a different way. In Antonio she resurrects a good father, compliant now and rather childlike, and she takes charge of loss, controls it instead of suffering it passively, by ruining and expelling Shylock. In him she finds a highly complex

scapegoat: castrating father and devouring mother, possessive parent and vindictive, sadistic lover.

Neither part of this strategy is completely satisfying: an audience often finds it hard to overlook Antonio's disappointment and harder still to accept the demonization of Shylock. But Portia has a third charm to resolve the conflict with fathers and make tolerable the passing of their preeminence: identification.¹⁸ She only criticizes her father and his will once, just after she first appears on the stage: "I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike" (I.ii.22-3). Nerissa answers the complaint promptly, and goes on to show Portia that her own wishes coincide with her father's whether she knows it or not. She mentions, one by one, the suitors her mistress detests, and then warns her that if even the most repulsive should "choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him" (I.ii.90-2). She raises the specter of such a marriage only to dispel it, however, and with it whatever might remain of Portia's filial resentment: "they have acquainted me with their determinations, which is indeed . . . to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition" (I.ii.99-103). Nerissa transfers the weight of this "imposition" from Portia to the suitors. Her interpretation defines a ritual that protects instead of oppressing, and Portia renews her commitment to it. As soon as she does so, Nerissa speaks for the first time of Bassanio, and links him with Portia's father: "Do you not remember

lady in your father's time a Venetian . . . " (I.ii.110-11). Viola makes a similar association in Twelfth Night: "Orsino! I have heard my father name him" (I.ii.28). The exchange between Portia and Nerissa resembles an internal debate in which Portia's expression of loyalty to her father's intentions clears the way for her first thoughts about her husband to be.

The resolution is more than a matter of loyalty, however. In giving herself to Bassanio, Portia claims to be "an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised" (III.ii.159), but her own eloquence undermines the pose, and her subsequent victory over Shylock makes it absurd. She asks Bassanio for instructions, but he has already warned Gratiano not to let his "parts . . . show / Something too liberal" (II.ii.173-6) in Belmont, and he is careful to take his own advice.

Madam, you have bereft me of all words,
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins,
And there is such confusion in my powers,
As after some oration fairly spoke
By a beloved prince (III.ii.175-9)

Bassanio disparages his own verbal powers and celebrates Portia's, for male success in Belmont depends on suppressing the tongue, not exhibiting it; no suitor thrives by swaggering. Portia submits publicly to his authority and makes a point of calling him "my lord," but she bestows the same respectful title on the foolish Aragon and even, as a jest, on one of her own servants. What man, we may wonder, can be a true lord to this lady, with her devastating mockery of pretension and

insufficiency in the princes of Naples, France, Germany, and England? Not Bassanio, surely: with little more than a certain tact and Antonio's love to distinguish him from Gratiano or Lorenzo, this charming young social adventurer will never be master except in name. Portia speaks wishfully of uniting her own spirit with that of "her lord, her governor, her king" (III.ii.165), but to no avail. Bassanio's own simile associates her with the "beloved prince" she would like to find in him, and subsequent events confirm his intuition.

Aragon's scroll praises experience and maturity, virtues likely in a man the age of Portia's father, but not in a passionate young suitor: "Seven times tried that judgment is, / That did never choose amiss" (II.ix.64-5). According to the verse which greets Morocco, the man who wins Portia must be "as wise as bold, / Young in limbs, in judgment old" (II.vii.70-1). No man in the play is described in these terms, but the letter of introduction which presents Portia herself to the Venetian court uses the identical paradox: "I never knew so young a body with so old a head" (IV.i.162-3). The praise is accurate. While less calculated plain speaking is a mark of Shakespeare's other witty heroines, Portia shrinks from candor, always aware of how "a lewd interpreter" (III.iv.80) might respond to her remarks. Even when alone with her confidant, she rarely throws off this constraint. She is content to endorse Nerissa's warm praise of Bassanio without adding a word of her own, and with self-conscious modesty cuts short a speech which "comes too near the praising of

myself" (III.iv.22). Portia combines Shylock's mastery of language with an unerring sense of her audience, and would never, as he does, waste a grand apologia on Salerio and Solanio, the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of Venice. Profoundly theatrical, she reserves her finest effects for the perfect moment, like the bird in whom she finds her own strategy reflected, the nightingale who refuses to "sing by day / When every goose is cackling" (V.i.104-5). Portia alone contains what she calls "madness the youth" and "good counsel the cripple" (I.ii.19-20), and she alone is qualified to be the husband-father whom Shakespeare and her father's will demand for her.

The heroine who incorporates the essence of a missing father is also a feature of the other mature comedies. "Truly the lady fathers herself," Don Pedro says of Hero in Much Ado; "Be happy, lady, for you are like an honorable father" (I.i.105-7). Hero's helplessness when the Prince, Claudio, and her father denounce her does not justify this curious praise; it takes the discerning and benignly paternal Friar Francis to save her. However, Rosalind, Helena in All's Well, and Portia herself all live up to Don Pedro's description of a happy lady. Helena has learned her father's medical art so well that she becomes, like Portia in the courtroom, a "Doctor She" (II.i.79), a woman who embodies her father's essential qualities, who represents a special kind of fusion. "Thou art thy father's daughter, there's enough" (I.iii.56), Duke Frederick tells Rosalind when she asks for an explanation of her banishment; her connection proves to be less with a specific biological father than with a

paternal source of magic and authority. Her true father Duke Senior fails to recognize her beneath her disguise, although she has "much question with him" (III.iv.33-4). His unpossessive affection is in fact the ideal so rare in Shakespeare, a prelude to other attachment but not an obstacle: "so he laugh'd and let me go. But what talk we of fathers, when there is such a man as Orlando?" (III.iv.35-7). In the end, neither Orlando nor Duke Senior shares Rosalind's command, more openly acknowledged than Portia's. Firmly based on her own masterful role-playing and stage direction, it also owes something to her connection with a wizard who sounds rather like Prospero: "I have, since I was three years old, convers'd with a magician, most profound in his art and yet not damnable" (V.ii.58-60). Like Helena, Rosalind is no mere sorcerer's apprentice, but has fully assimilated her teacher's art: "I say I am a magician" (V.ii.69), she insists, proves her ability by producing Hymen himself, and retains some of her magic even in the Epilogue: "My way is to conjure you" (10).

Like Rosalind and Helena, Portia is something of a magician, and not in her legal dexterity alone. Perhaps her greatest triumph comes through her mastery of language, in the speech which sets the stage for Bassanio's test with the caskets.

If you do love me, you will find me out.

Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof.

Let music sound while he doth make his choice;

Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,

Fading in music. That the comparison
 May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream
 And wat'ry death-bed for him. He way win;
 And what is music then? Then music is
 Even as the flourish when true subjects bow
 To a new-crowned monarch. Such it is
 As are those dulcet sounds in break of day
 That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear
 And summon him to marriage. Now he goes,
 With no less presence, but with much more love,
 Than young Alcides, when he did redeem
 The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
 To the sea-monster. I stand for sacrifice;
 The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,
 With bleared visages, come forth to view
 The issue of th' exploit. Go Hercules!

(III.ii.41-60)

Portia accepts her husband's rather feminine passivity--the sounds that "creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear"--and emphasizes that the "comparison," not Bassanio, should "stand more proper"; thus Shakespeare displaces a concern for his hero's potency onto the act of making poetry. The speech expresses a wish more than it describes a reality: Portia creates, in a rhetoric of question and answer, in poetry which calls attention to its own process, a glamorous fiction which can for a moment replace the nervous,

undistinguished world she inhabits. She begins with a direct address to her lover, but shifts quickly to the third person. Later in the scene she again uses the third person to describe the "unlesson'd girl," as if to separate herself from a figure who she knows does not exist.

Portia wants her poetry to transform a "dreaming bridegroom" into a "new-crowned monarch," and she forces us to notice the development of her artifice. Bassanio himself disappears in a cloud of comparisons, and commanding the scene is Portia the poet and playwright who directs Nerissa and her lesser servants, orders music, chooses similes, develops and explicates them. If an audience feels little suspense at this moment, it is because Shakespeare declares that the poet has true power. The tale of Hercules and the maiden is a poor analogy for the dramatic situation--Bassanio, not Portia, stands for sacrifice--but the sea monster makes us think of Portia's victory over the monstrous Shylock rather than anything inherently threatening in her, rather than the tension summed up by her own word, "death-bed." If there remain anxieties too intense to dispel and conflicts that cannot be resolved, Portia's partial success looks ahead to the more pervasive harmony created by the supreme poet-magician, Prospero.

I have put off discussion of Twelfth Night until the end of this chapter because it is conspicuously unlike the other three comedies in the nearly complete absence of fathers, an absence which has much to do with its atmosphere of unbridled merry-making. Before moving

on to the disappointing fathers of Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare imagines a world of energetic, festive children freed from adult restraints. There are occasional hints of paternal age and weariness in Feste, especially in his final song, and a delicious parody of paternal piety in his portrait of Sir Topas the curate, but these are mere echoes of fatherhood, and Malvolio's attempt to impose decorum on the party only leads to his total bafflement, the would-be jailer jailed. I say "nearly complete absence" because in addition to Malvolio, a more characteristic figure appears: Antonio, the sea-captain who saves Sebastian from drowning--"His life I gave him" (V.i.76)--follows him to Orsino's court, gives him money, and (he thinks) defends him from attack. Antonio endures a compressed version of the fate which befalls Adam in As You Like It as well as his namesake in The Merchant: he goes rapidly from guardian to dependent, forced to ask for the return of his purse when he is arrested by Orsino's officers. His pain and betrayal when Sebastian becomes "a twenty years' removed thing" (V.i.85) resemble a father's sense of loss when a child outgrows his protection, but they are lost in the successive revelations of the denouement.

Olivia's entrance breaks into Antonio's complaint, and Orsino turns his attention to what he perceives as her "perverseness" (V.i.108). It provokes him to an ugly spasm in the style of Othello --"a savage jealousy" (V.i.115)--and a denunciation of her as "the marble-breasted tyrant" (V.i.120). This movement from the disappointment of a possessive father to misogynistic fury duplicates

on a small scale the continuing shift of Shakespeare's preoccupations. His increasing interest in masterful women appears in the progression from Beatrice, who wishes she were a man but clearly isn't, to Rosalind, who dresses and at times commands like one, to Portia and her legal, poetic, and personal authority, and finally to the tensions and paradoxes of Twelfth Night. "Thou dost speak masterly" (II.iv.22), Orsino tells Viola, although she plays the part of a servant, and the other women are more openly dominating. Maria destroys Malvolio with a trick that makes Toby invite her to "set thy foot o' my neck" (II.v.184) and think of becoming her "bond-slave" (II.iv.187), and Sebastian is willing to "be rul'd by" (IV.i.63) Olivia at least in part because she can "sway her house, command her followers" (IV.iii.17) so capably. The end of the play resolves a potential conflict about dominion with an elegant compromise--Viola will be her "master's mistress" (V.i.323)--but the balance seems precarious and prepares us for the greater tensions about authority and gender and the harsher return to patriarchy in Measure for Measure.

Notes

- ¹All quotations from Shakespeare follow the text of The Complete Works, ed. David Bevington (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1980).
- ²Coppélia Kahn discusses this shift in Shakespeare's focus from fathers and sons in the histories to fathers and daughters in the romances. See "The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family" in Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1980), pp. 217-43.
- ³Susan L. Harris first suggested this parallel to me in conversation. C. L. Barber, at the end of his chapter in Shakespeare's Festive Comedy (Cleveland: World, 1963), remarks on the affinity between Lear and The Merchant (p. 191) but does not elaborate.
- ⁴Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 190. Another critic with this perspective is Frank Kermode, who writes that the play "is 'about' judgment, redemption, and mercy; the suppression in human history of the grim four thousand years of unalleviated justice by the era of love and mercy. It begins with usury and corrupt love; it ends with harmony and perfect love." "The Mature Comedies" in Early Shakespeare, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 3 (New York: St. Martins, 1961), p. 224. See also G. Wilson Knight, The Shakespearean Tempest (London: Methuen, 1953).
- ⁵Among the most valuable are Norman Rabkin, "Meaning and Shakespeare" in Shakespeare 1971: Proceedings of the World Shakespeare Congress, ed. Clifford Leech and J. M. R. Margeson (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1972), pp. 89-106 and Leonard Tennenhouse, "The Counterfeit Order of The Merchant of Venice" in Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays, pp. 54-69.

Tennenhouse notes that "the argument over what it is really 'about' is a permanent feature of Merchant criticism" (p. 54).

⁶Eric Partridge documents the pun at great length in Shakespeare's Bawdy (New York: Dutton, 1969), pp. 218-19.

⁷Maynard Mack describes a comparable pattern of strength, collapse, and return to dignity in the tragedies. See "The Jacobean Shakespeare: Some Observations on the Construction of the Tragedies" in Jacobean Theater, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 1 (New York: St. Martin's, 1961).

⁸The Stranger in Shakespeare (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), p. 100.

⁹Writing about The Merchant in his essay, "The Theme of the Three Caskets," Freud identifies the caskets as women and connects them with the three daughters in Lear as well as with comparable situations in folklore and mythology. He argues that the correctly chosen woman in such stories, apparently the "most desirable and the most lovable," is in fact a substitute for "the Goddess of Death, death itself." The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), XII, 298-9. While his own conclusion refers specifically to Cordelia, it also seems applicable to Portia.

¹⁰For a rigorous and illuminating study of such fears in a later play, see Murray M. Schwartz, "Leontes' Jealousy in The Winter's Tale," American Imago, 30 (1973), 250-73.

- ¹¹In his study of Venus and Adonis, Alan B. Rothenberg finds in the imagery "a preoedipal conflict between an overactive, too-loving mother and her resistant nursing infant. On a still deeper level of the imagery the seduction becomes the fantasy of an oral rape of a passive infant's mouth by the breast or mouth of his aggressive mother" "The Oral Rape Fantasy and Rejection of Mother in the Imagery of Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 40 (1971), p. 448.
- ¹²Partridge cites this passage as evidence that the ring is a symbol of the vagina. Shakespeare's Bawdy, p. 175
- ¹³"Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" (the "Little Hans" case history), Standard Edition, X, 36n.
- ¹⁴Fiedler asserts in his excellent study that "the play in some sense celebrates, certainly releases ritually, the full horror of anti-Semitism." The Stranger in Shakespeare, p. 98.
- ¹⁵Shakespearean Meanings (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 208.
- ¹⁶The Stranger in Shakespeare, p. 110.
- ¹⁷For a helpful discussion of this mechanism, see Martha Wolfenstein, "Loss, Rage, and Repetition," Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 24 (1969), 432-60. Summarizing her work, Wolfenstein writes: "What occurs is a decomposition of the ambivalence toward the lost parent, with the negative sector being diverted toward the surviving parent and others in the child's environment" (pp. 432-3). In the terms of this model, Shylock, the play's most conspicuous target, is the surviving parent, and the unsuccessful suitors Portia derides (both those who appear and those who are only described) are the others in her environment.

- ¹⁸Freud discusses identification as a part of mourning in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Standard Edition, XVIII, 108-9. See also Coppélia Kahn, "The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family," pp. 218-19.